United Nations A/C.3/55/SR.22

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
12 April 2001
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

Contents

Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of the rights of children *(continued)*

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

00-68809 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of the rights of children *(continued)* (A/55/41, A/55/162-S/2000/715, A/55/163-S/2000/712, A/55/201, A/55/297, A/55/442 and A/55/467-S/2000/973)

1. **Mrs. Russell** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that, at the World Summit for Children, held in New York in 1990, the international community had accepted specific commitments in 10 central areas, ranging from the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the alleviation of poverty and the revitalization of economic growth, all aimed at the betterment of life for children. Much had been achieved since then, but according to the *State of the World's Children 2000*, a number of goals remained out of reach, and some new problems had emerged: deeper poverty, greater inequality, international conflicts, internal war and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It was time for the international community to review those goals at the upcoming special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child meant that a rights-based approach should underpin all future action for children, and that countries had an obligation to promote a child-friendly environment. However, poverty was still a grave obstacle and access to all basic social services was linked to reducing it. Those essentials comprised basic health care, education, nutrition programmes, safe water supply and sanitation. That broad understanding had developed during the 1990s. Poverty eradication must be tackled with resolution through such initiatives as debt relief for poor countries, review of the goals adopted at the Copenhagen Summit, and a revitalization of the 20/20 initiative. It was important to ensure that globalization and the revolution in information and communications technology were harnessed for the betterment of all.

2. She emphasized that education, especially for girls, was a prerequisite for creating more equal societies and attacking poverty. It equipped children with skills to succeed in earning a sustainable livelihood, provided a forum for changing attitudes about violence and promoting equality, and put girls on a path to empowerment. The countries of the Caribbean Community, responding to the call for education for all, had implemented the action plan initiated at the Jomtien Conference, at both regional and national levels. They had continued implementation of the regional project for health and family-life education, and they had made special efforts to combat drug addiction and adolescent pregnancy and to promote early-childhood education. Many countries of the region had also embarked on an expansion of computer usage.

3. It was important not to underestimate the incidence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on children. The Caribbean region had the highest prevalence of the epidemic, second only to that of sub-Saharan Africa and, unlike other regions, in the Caribbean it was on the increase. HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death among young men in the Caribbean aged 15-49. Children had become particularly vulnerable, for their suffering could be twofold – through infection and also through loss of parents. The pandemic violated every tenet of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, from their right to education and health to protection from exploitation and harm. It was not just a health problem: it was also a social, economic and moral problem which, left unchecked, would put the promise of sustainable development of the Caribbean beyond its reach. At a regional conference held recently in Bridgetown, Barbados, the CARICOM countries had started to tackle the problem more aggressively. The Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic Development, at its meeting in June 2000, had recognized that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a top priority for the Caribbean.

4. In the light of the need to combat drug abuse, sexual exploitation of children, child pornography and child trafficking, the CARICOM States applauded the adoption by the General Assembly of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. They welcomed the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (A/55/163-S/2000/712), and were encouraged by the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000). The report on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/55/297) confirmed that States would have to remain vigilant in those areas.

5. All the Caribbean countries had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had established mechanisms to monitor its implementation. With financial assistance from UNICEF, they had instituted various programmes to promote the

Convention, such as radio call-in programmes, youth parliaments and training seminars. The Convention had helped to improve the legal conditions for children, since many States were amending existing legislation. The region would have to ensure that draft legislation was thoroughly discussed publicly so that the new laws were accepted. The reform of legislation relating to children and families had been progressive since the adoption by the CARICOM countries of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Most of those countries recognized that children had equal status, whether born in or out of wedlock. That was significant in a region where many households were female-headed households.

6. **Mr. Giulietti** (Observer for Switzerland) called on States, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and economic actors to redouble their efforts to ensure that the universal nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was accompanied by respect for the rights embodied in it, especially in the context of armed conflicts. Switzerland had actively participated in the elaboration of the Optional Protocol related to the involvement of children in armed conflict, which it had signed during the Millennium Assembly and intended to ratify. That instrument had evident shortcomings, especially with regard to the regime for voluntary recruitment and, to some extent, participation in hostilities, a field in which the provisions should be more restrictive; however, at least it had the merit of establishing 18 years as the age for conscription.

7. Regional action was also called for in order to ensure better protection of the rights of children, especially in the case of armed conflict, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) should make a greater effort in behalf of children by setting up strong institutional machinery.

8. Referring to State and institutional violence against children, which he understood to involve torture and maltreatment inflicted upon children by members of the police and security forces, especially during preventive detention, he appealed to States to punish those responsible for such violations and to take tangible measures to protect the rights of children suspected, accused or found guilty of violations of criminal law. He supported the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child that the Secretary-General should conduct an in-depth study on the subject of violence against children. Switzerland called on all States to take an active part in 2001 in elaborating an optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which would make it possible to improve the plight of children who were victims of maltreatment and torture. Switzerland, which had made the protection and promotion of the rights of the child a central element of its foreign policy, was ready to pursue its efforts during preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

9. Switzerland applauded the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and many non-governmental organizations active in the field, and welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1314 (2000) and the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/163-S/2000/712), particularly those relating to the responsibility of non-State actors and the need to curb the proliferation of small arms. Lastly, he thanked Canada for having organized the International Conference on War-Affected Children, held in Winnipeg.

10. **Mr. Dos Santos** (Mozambique) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/55/163-S/2000/712) and the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (A/55/41), and said that the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly, would bring additional impetus to existing instruments aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of children. He said it was unacceptable that large numbers of children were refugees, displaced or serving as child soldiers, and stressed that all international and national actors in society, comprising Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia, should complement, by their will and their action, the role of international law. The provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols should be embodied in national legislation and policies in the political, social, economic and legal fields. Mozambique welcomed the attention that the Security Council had given to the issue of children in armed conflict and urged the Council to pursue its efforts. He also commended the Canadian Government for having

convened the Winnipeg International Conference on War-Affected Children.

11. In partnership with civil society and other stakeholders, Mozambique had adopted legal, social and economic frameworks with a view to incorporating the main provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other instruments, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, into its national legislation. For example, it had established the legal age of 18 years as the minimum age for conscription, and had adopted laws on employment and the family.

12. Having experienced the aftermath of war, Mozambique had, in the light of regional and international instruments, adopted measures aimed at protecting the rights of children both during and after a war. Such measures included the re-integration of children involved in armed conflict, the training of teachers to provide assistance to traumatized children, and access to education for refugee and displaced children. The Government had also adopted a strategy aimed at ensuring the welfare of orphaned, disabled and traumatized children. It had undertaken a programme to reintegrate families separated by war and by the floods that had devastated the southern and central areas of the country early in 2000. He emphasized that individuals also played an important role in all those efforts, and that ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols must be translated into concrete actions.

13. **Mrs. Brobbey** (Ghana) said that, despite the progress made towards many of the goals set at the 1990 World Summit for Children, poverty, ignorance, conflict, social instability and diseases such as HIV/AIDS still threatened human rights and sabotaged the development of children worldwide. She deplored the non-committal attitude of the international community towards the Convention on the Rights of the Child, even though it had been ratified by a record number of countries. She urged Member States which had not yet done so to accept the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention regarding the increase of membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18. Such action would facilitate the Committee's review of States parties' reports. Her delegation also looked forward to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

14. With respect to children affected by armed conflict, the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (A/55/442) described a grave state of affairs. Ghana was, however, encouraged by his efforts and welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the Optional Protocol related to the involvement of children in armed conflict and of resolution 1314 (2000) by the Security Council, which called on Member States to exclude grave crimes against children from amnesty provisions and to adopt measures against the illicit trade in natural resources and in small arms that fuelled wars and contributed to the victimization of children. In that regard, she expressed appreciation to the Government of Canada for helping to organize the Conference in Accra in April 2000, which had adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action to assist children affected by armed conflict in West Africa.

15. Her delegation was of the view that enhanced international cooperation among law-enforcement agencies would help in combating crimes relating to the sexual exploitation of children. She welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the Optional Protocol related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and looked forward to the adoption of the optional protocol on illicit trafficking in human beings, which would supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Her delegation endorsed the views expressed by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and considered that the erosion of family structures had resulted in the loss of the best stabilizing element in the lives of children. It was therefore imperative that the international community should adopt measures to strengthen the family. Member States also needed to reform their justice system and to take remedial and preventive measures. She emphasized the important role of the media and campaigns in raising awareness of the operations of traffickers and the violation of the rights of children. Ghana's interest in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child was evidenced by its revision of the laws on child rights and of the justice and welfare systems. The age of criminal responsibility had been raised from 7 to 14 years, and customary practices involving servitude of any form had been proscribed to protect children. Her delegation lent its support to the Special Rapporteur's intention to focus on collaboration with the business sector with a view to abolishing child labour and protecting

employed children under 18 from the risk of sexual exploitation by their supervisors. In conclusion, she acknowledged the efforts of UNICEF, including its work in preventing the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

16. **Mr. Cherif** (Tunisia) welcomed the adoption of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and emphasized the primary importance of follow-up to the World Summit for Children at a time when the rights of children were only too often still being trampled upon. Despite the progress made, the situation remained troubling, since there were in the world some 300,000 children under 18 years of age who participated in armed conflicts, 20 million refugee children and over 1 million orphans or children separated from their parents. Moreover, Many children suffered the consequences of sanctions regimes or were victims of conflict situations, such as the 12-year-old boy killed in cold blood by soldiers.

17. Tunisia, for its part, had instituted a national action plan in behalf of children with a view to implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, enabling it to make significant progress, including a marked reduction in infant mortality, a vaccination rate of over 90 per cent, the development of day-care centres and kindergartens and primary-school enrolment of 99 per cent, both for girls and for boys.

18. The establishment of the Supreme Council for Childhood, the promulgation of the Child Code and the observance of the Day of the Child testified to Tunisia's efforts to ensure respect for child rights. Some practical measures had also been taken, including the appointment of a Commissioner for the Protection of Children in the governorates, who was carrying out important work in the field, and a judge for minors, in order to resolve problems encountered by children and young people.

19. **Mr. Mangachi** (United Republic of Tanzania), associating his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, said that his Government had adopted a national action plan to reduce infant mortality and malnutrition, and to improve access to education, health services, shelter and potable water, in pursuance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had ratified in 1991 and translated into Kiswahili, the national language, in order to disseminate the Convention as widely as possible. As a result, more than 80 per cent of children were being vaccinated against childhood diseases, definitive strides had been made towards eradicating polio, and infant mortality had been reduced. Those were modest achievements, however, and to speed up progress, there was a need for intensified support from the international community, the Bretton Woods institutions, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the private sector, national and international non-governmental organizations and all the donor countries that had assisted Tanzania in its endeavours.

20. Whereas globalization could be of assistance to developing countries, they were beset by debt and by the lack of investments and flow of resources, which prevented them from focusing on problems which specifically concerned children, such as education and health.

21. It was unacceptable that, each year, 11 million children died from preventable diseases. In Tanzania, the HIV/AIDS pandemic had reversed the gains recorded in the health sector despite the efforts of UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. At the special session which it would hold in 2001 to consider the problem of HIV/AIDS in all its aspects, the General Assembly should analyse the impact of the pandemic on children, particularly girls, and should devise a plan of action. The Secretary-General's report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/55/201) presented an alarming picture which could be tolerated no longer. The sale of children, their sexual exploitation and child labour were inadmissible, and those who perpetrated acts of violence against children in conflict situations were criminals.

22. **Ms. Suñé** (Andorra) said that the year 2000 already had to its credit a fairly high number of signatories to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Andorra hoped that the number of signatories would increase before the end of the current session of the General Assembly.

23. In her delegation's view, the debate on the subject of children always raised a host of questions stemming

from the fact that, in one part of the world, children received maximum attention, whereas elsewhere it was so difficult to reach an acceptable minimum standard. That was why Andorra had declared itself ready to cooperate fully in preparing for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, and hoped that the relevant bodies, especially the Economic and Social Council, of which Andorra would become a member in January 2001, would contribute to those efforts.

24. With regard to the protection of children affected by war, the fact that the Security Council had undertaken to protect such children, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had emphasized in his report (A/55/442), was a significant step. Another essential point was that of providing, in the context of all peacekeeping operations, for training in child protection in order to enable United Nations personnel to respond better to the needs of children in the field. As to resettlement following a conflict, attention had rightly been drawn to the need to provide more coherent and well-conceived plans that took into account the needs of young people who had lived through a war situation. Andorra also supported all initiatives aimed at strengthening accountability for all crimes committed against children, and welcomed the recent work of elaborating the Rules of Evidence and Procedure of the International Criminal Court. Her delegation also thanked the Canadian Government for having organized the Winnipeg International Conference on War-Affected Children, and hoped that the objectives it had adopted would make it possible to secure the necessary support.

25. As to the fight against AIDS, the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on that issue in 2001 should take particular account of children, the future of the world.

26. With regard to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Andorra encouraged the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights to pursue her work. All Governments must strengthen their legislation in that field and do their utmost to help such children to return to a normal life.

27. Education was a pillar of action in behalf of children, and it was essential that human rights should remain a fundamental theme of the education of young people. Furthermore, the chronic problem of poverty, which reduced opportunities for many children, must be a major subject of new ideas and decision-making.

28. **Ms. Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) said that she was forced by the current situation to focus her statement on one issue – the systematic denial and violation of the rights of Palestinian children. In recent days, more than 20 children had been brutally and wilfully killed and more than 1,000 had been wounded. The wanton killing by an Israeli soldier of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy – a scene captured by camera for the eyes of the world to see – represented the stark tragedy of a Palestinian child living under Israeli occupation.

29. How was it possible for children to fully enjoy their rights to education, to a healthy childhood, to play and recreation, and to healthy development – in other words, all the rights to which they were entitled as human beings – when they were confronted daily with the appalling consequences of armed conflict and foreign occupation, when they lacked even the most basic needs and when their very protection and survival were at stake? The necessary prerequisite for children to enjoy their fundamental rights and to develop in a healthy and normal manner was that they should enjoy, even during armed conflicts and foreign occupation, conditions of peace and security based on respect for the purposes and principles of human-rights instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The recent excessive use of force by the Israeli occupying army had resulted in grave loss of life, hundreds of wounded, the destruction of homes and properties and the rapid deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. Many families lacked electricity, schools had been closed, and movement of persons and goods was severely restricted. Over several decades, Israeli policies had prevented or seriously debilitated the enjoyment by Palestinian children of even the most basic rights guaranteed by the various instruments, which Israel did not respect.

30. Palestine remained committed to peace. It urged the international community to uphold its commitments, as declared in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, to work to ameliorate the plight of the millions of children who lived under especially difficult

circumstances, including those under foreign occupation.

31. **Mr. Aguzzi-Duran** (Venezuela) said that, although progress had been made both at the standard-setting level and in the promotion of and respect for existing rights, principles and rules, the emergence of new situations and the deterioration of those that were longstanding pointed the way to areas in which the international community must devote all its attention, such as the appalling situation of thousands of war-affected children mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report (A/55/163-S/2000/712).

32. Tribute should be paid to the organizations of the United Nations system, Governments and the international community, especially non-governmental organizations, for the work they were doing to help, at both the psychological and the physical level, millions of children living in abject circumstances because they were victims of poverty, a precarious economic or social situation, sickness, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation, illiteracy, hunger, intolerance, disabilities or lack of legal protection. It was nevertheless very encouraging that the international community was relentlessly engaged in establishing a set of rules to restrict and punish the legal freedom invoked by certain States to elude their moral and ethical responsibility to preserve the integrity of all children and young people. Accordingly, Venezuela attached great importance to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which the General Assembly had recently adopted and which his Government had ratified on 7 September 2000. The international community must now show evidence of its political will to translate into reality the new provisions which it had freely adopted.

33. As to the involvement of children in armed conflict, the fact that legal instruments had been adopted and undertakings given had not prevented all sorts of atrocities from being visited upon children. Venezuela opposed the participation of children in armed conflicts and its legislation established 18 years as the minimum age for conscription and for participation in conflicts.

34. With regard to the second Optional Protocol, Venezuela, which had supported its elaboration, condemned those practices which ran counter to the rights of children and the spirit of the Convention. In its view, the legal protection designed to counter the problem of the sale and abuse of children should not be confined to sexual exploitation; it was also necessary to condemn the practices which violated international rules governing such matters as adoption. Venezuelan legislation covered all those aspects. The new Constitution, one of whose first chapters was devoted to the duties, rights and protection of the individual, laid down among other principles that of equality and non-discrimination between the sexes, and that principle applied to both boys and girls living in Venezuela, who were treated on an equal footing. Venezuela was steadfastly engaged in bringing its legislation into conformity with the principles embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that context, an organic law had entered into force on 1 April 2000 for the protection of children and adolescents which recognized children as fully-fledged subjects of law, with rights and responsibilities like any other human being. The law also created mechanisms for guaranteeing to children in Venezuelan territory the exercise without any discrimination of the individual and collective rights to which they were entitled. The Government had now begun the second phase which, in addition to the setting up of monitoring machinery at all levels, would consist in disseminating and establishing on a lasting foundation the principles and rules embodied in the new law relating to the rights, duties and responsibilities of the State, the family and the community.

35. **Mr. Kuindwa** (Kenya) said that, in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, his delegation welcomed all the interventions of the United Nations and other relevant agencies and of all the support systems put in place to assist children.

36. Kenya, given the great importance of the issue of children, had approved the Children's Bill of Rights, had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and, during the Millennium Summit, had signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. Although Kenya had not experienced armed conflict during its years of independence, it had offered refuge to child victims from neighbouring countries, and had thus seen at first hand the suffering of innocent children as a result of armed conflict. In collaboration with UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government was instituting peace and reconciliation initiatives, and considered that there was a need to assess and remedy the emotional damage

suffered by traumatized children and to adopt an integrated, action-oriented approach which combined the elements of social policy, political will, economic commitment and efforts to mobilize adequate funds. There was a need to establish training services and capacity-building in trauma counselling and rehabilitation at the local level. Kenya was resolved to lend all the support it could, and hoped that the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children would offer an opportunity to review the goals and find solutions.

37. **Ms. Mudie** (Australia) said that the way children and young people were treated was a defining characteristic of a society. That was why Australia welcomed the ratification by 191 States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption by the General Assembly in May 2000 of the Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It intended, following the usual domestic consultations, to ratify ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and considered that the adoption of the Agenda for Action by the International Conference for War-Affected Children, held at Winnipeg in September 2000, was important in focusing attention during preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

38. Australia likewise supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and welcomed his latest report (A/55/442), in which he appealed to the many organizations working in that field to create a critical and sustainable mass of activities that would yield tangible results. Australia likewise supported the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and had been an active participant in a meeting, held in March 2000, of the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking in Women and Children, hosted by the Governments of the Philippines and the United States of America.

39. Australia itself had been the source of several initiatives in that field: at the level of the Asia-Pacific region, its bilateral aid programme, in collaboration with UNICEF, focused on basic education, primary health and maternal health, and, by focusing on gender and development, also contributed to the protection and promotion of the rights of the girl child. Furthermore, in keeping with the Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted by the World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996, Australia had launched in August 2000 a national plan of action against the commercial exploitation of children, and hoped that the forthcoming World Congress to be held in Yokohama would present an opportunity to consolidate international efforts.

40. There were already encouraging signs: 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, progress had been made towards achieving the goals set by the 1990 World Summit for Children in immunization coverage, iodine-deficiency control, promotion of breast-feeding and other fields. However, issues such as adequate nutrition, high mortality, sanitation and girls' education were of serious concern. The special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children would need to devise a programme of action identifying priority areas consistent with UNICEF's future global agenda for children. Australia believed that there was a need to build on past achievements in the legal recognition of the inalienable rights of the child at the international level.

41. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) noted that the current session of the General Assembly coincided with preparations for the end-of-decade review of the progress made in achieving the goals identified in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted by the 1990 World Summit for Children. According to the information gathered, more than 1.2 billion people lived in abject poverty, of whom almost 700 million were children; there were over 22 million refugee or displaced children; children were the victims of armed conflict and violence, such as that inflicted by the Indian occupation forces in Kashmir; and women and children continued to suffer the most from the spread of HIV/AIDS and from discrimination.

42. In his latest report (A/55/442), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict noted the erosion of traditional value systems that had hitherto constituted a buffer to protect children and women from the horrors of war. It was therefore imperative that the relevant activists in political and civil society, including parents, teachers and religious and community leaders, should join

hands to revive the traditional safeguards for women and children by creating a culture of respect for diversity and promoting peaceful coexistence among all sections of society. Pakistan hoped that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict would go a long way to addressing that issue. It was also particularly important, as the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had pointed out in her latest report (A/55/297), to strengthen the institution of the family so as to create a healthy environment for the emotional, physical, moral, spiritual and intellectual development of children. It would also help to protect them against the grave threats posed by the misuse of adoptions, sexual exploitation and child prostitution for lucrative purposes – a market which, every year, recruited approximately 1 million children and reaped profits of $7-12 billion. Pakistan hoped that the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography adopted by the General Assembly in May 2000, as well as the ongoing negotiations in Vienna on the optional protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, would strengthen international efforts to curb that despicable business.

43. In that context, Pakistan had withdrawn all reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had ratified the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, on increasing the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18. Pakistan had also promulgated a law which abolished capital punishment for juvenile offenders aged under 18 at the time of the crime; it also prohibited keeping juvenile offenders in jail with adult prisoners or hardened criminals.

44. Pakistan had been particularly active in the elimination of child labour. According to ILO, 250 million children between 5 and 14 years of age were engaged in full- or part-time work in various parts of the world. Because of that situation, a vicious cycle of poverty in the developing countries perpetuated problems of illiteracy, chronic ill-health and malnutrition from one generation to the next. The developed countries should provide financial and technical assistance to the developing countries to establish parallel vocational institutions so as to help the latter achieve their right to development. At the national level, Pakistan had adopted the Employment of Children Act of 1991 and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1992, and at the beginning of 2000 had launched a national action plan to eliminate the vestiges of child labour from all economic sectors. That action plan, whose implementation was being supervised by a Permanent Advisory Committee headed by the Federal Minister for Labour, envisaged a scheme to provide opportunities for youngsters to learn a trade. In parallel, the national plan of action for education envisaged compulsory primary education for every child, the upgrading of primary-teacher qualifications, the recruitment of 216,000 new teachers, the increase in female literacy to 50 per cent by the year 2003 and reduction of the gender gap in the literacy rate from 11 per cent to 5 per cent.

45. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba), quoting statistics regarding the gulf separating developed and developing countries in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, said that Cuba had for some years been applying a national action programme for children, despite its economic difficulties, proving the extent to which political will could be decisive. What worked for Cuba did not, however, work for many countries, where the lack of progress in behalf of children was largely attributable to structural factors which deprived the public authorities of means of action. Accordingly, in an effort of solidarity, the international community should provide those countries with the resources they needed in order to apply the national action plans they had elaborated as a follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

46. Cuba welcomed the adoption, in May 2000, of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had recently signed. Their entry into force would enable the rights of the child to be better protected.

47. She thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for his report (A/55/442), which enhanced awareness of the problem. However, Cuba was concerned that the Security Council, whose mandate was the maintenance of international peace and security, increasingly took up issues involving the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Responsibility for those issues rested not with the Security Council but with the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council which, under the Charter, ultimately had competence in

the social sphere. The General Assembly could always adopt measures if the protection of the rights of the child in situations of armed conflict required more vigorous action, unless other bodies could solve the problems arising within their mandate.

48. Cuba was deeply concerned that the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been able, in the very year of adoption of the Optional Protocol on that subject, to submit only an interim report (A/55/297). Her delegation also considered that, although the Special Rapporteur had undoubtedly contributed to raising awareness of the phenomena she had been requested to study, she had not submitted the well-documented and full report expected of her. Cuba hoped that, once she had finished studying and analysing the replies of Governments to the questionnaire she had addressed to them, it would be possible to re-examine the issue in greater depth, taking a closer look at the problems arising and finding means to solve them.

49. Cuba noted with concern that some special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights tended to focus their reports on one aspect of the questions they were assigned to study. Ms. Calcetas-Santos had chosen to focus her report on the role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations in promoting the rights of the child, in other words, on the fact that certain enterprises set up nurseries in the workplace to enable working mothers to have their children near them, provided scholarships for children of disadvantaged families, and so on. Such measures were laudable and undoubtedly formed part of the promotion and protection of the rights of the child but had little to do with the Special Rapporteur's mandate, which was to consider the scope, causes and consequences of specific problems and to draw up clear recommendations regarding the means to remedy them.

50. In Cuba, the promotion and protection of the rights of the child were not empty words: remarkable results had been achieved, despite the embargo imposed by the United States. Everything was done to enable each child, from the moment of conception, to flourish and grow without hindrance. Thus, the ratio of teachers per inhabitant was the highest in the world (one teacher for 42 inhabitants) and the level of primary-school enrolment was close to 100 per cent. Such diseases as diphtheria, poliomyelitis, neonatal and infant tetanus, meningitis and tuberculosis had been eradicated, thanks to a properly functioning health system, and the rate of infant mortality had been reduced to 7.1 per 1,000 live births.

51. **Mr. Ndzenge** (Cameroon) said that children, who in the past had been regarded as a collective treasure, were today the object of diabolical stakes. The systems of traditional values which had sheltered them from danger were no longer upheld. Their social situation had deteriorated and many of them were subjected to physical, mental and emotional violence that left an indelible mark. Their sufferings were further augmented by new phenomena such as AIDS, which afflicted them either as victims or as orphans, and the escalation of inter-tribal conflicts.

52. Cameroon, fully aware of that situation, supported all initiatives aimed at publicizing, promoting and defending the rights of the child. It had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, to ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; and it intended to accede to the future United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto.

53. His delegation saw no objection in having the Security Council take up the question of the protection of children in armed conflicts and considered that it fell within the Council's competence. Cameroon wished to thank all the national and international actors for their determined efforts to promote and defend the rights of the child, including the Commission on Human Rights and the Committee on the Rights of the Child and, in particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

54. It was now recognized that the main obstacles to respect for the rights of the child were poverty, HIV/AIDS and conflicts. Despite the unprecedented prosperity of the world economy, 40 per cent of the children of developing countries survived on less than one dollar a day. Since they were unable to develop fully, those children could not become responsible and productive adults. Consequently, the struggle against poverty, as the heads of State had emphasized at the Millennium Summit, remained a top priority. That required that the developed countries should give

financial aid to the developing countries in order to fund their basic social services, and should therefore raise the level of official development assistance, as well as finding an adequate solution to the debt problem. As for AIDS, his delegation shared the view of UNICEF that, in order to combat that pandemic, all leaders of the world must become fully aware of its scope and undertake to adopt measures that would protect children and young people from infection.

55. Cameroon, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 25 September 1990, was working steadfastly to protect and promote children's rights. Its activities included raising awareness among families and communities of the rights of the child; publicizing the relevant laws and instruments, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; promoting the creation of nurseries, day-care centres, orphanages and welcoming centres; supporting private initiatives for training and supervision during early childhood; and taking charge of juvenile delinquents by re-educating them when they were in specialized institutions or in prison and by helping them with subsequent reintegration.

56. **Mr. Kamara** (Sierra Leone) noted that, despite the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the situation of children remained critical in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries plagued by civil strife and poverty, and consequently unable to implement the Convention and its two Optional Protocols. His delegation hoped that the adoption of the Protocols would make it clear that the protection of the rights of the child was and must remain a matter of top priority for the international community.

57. Notwithstanding the especially arduous circumstances prevailing in Sierra Leone, the Government was mindful of its obligations to protect and promote the rights of children. It had established a Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children with particular responsibility for child protection, including those affected by armed conflict. With assistance from the international community, it had also set up a department charged with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, with attention to the special needs of child soldiers.

58. His Government wished to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and all those organizations which had spared no effort to alleviate the sufferings of war-affected children. It also wished to thank the Canadian Government for having financed and hosted the International Conference on War-Affected Children, recently held in Winnipeg.

59. The rehabilitation of children and their reintegration into society would be a long-term endeavour. To that end the Government had begun by establishing a national commission with the task of ensuring that their concerns and well-being were taken fully into account, but its means were limited. Sierra Leone would therefore continue to welcome bilateral assistance in order to ensure that children affected by war were accorded the required protection under the Convention and the Optional Protocols.

60. Sierra Leone applauded the Security Council's decision to establish a Special Court for Sierra Leone to try those responsible for atrocities committed during the war. The provision of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict under which any children to be tried by the Court must be at least 18 years of age would not be easily accepted in his country, since the adolescents under 18 who had committed atrocities were veritable army commanders and were well known by their victims and the population; nevertheless, it would help in creating a culture of peace.

61. **Ms. Baldeh** (Gambia), restricting her statement to the issue of children and armed conflict, thanked the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for their reports (A/55/163-S/2000/712 and A/55/442 respectively) and also commended Ms. Graça Machel for her dedicated advocacy in behalf of the world's children and UNICEF for its untiring efforts.

62. According to the statistics, which were distressing, as a result of armed conflict some 2 million children had died, and countless numbers had been wounded, orphaned, traumatized, displaced or maimed by landmines, forcibly conscripted into armed groups, abducted or abused; the situation was further compounded by the abundance of small arms and anti-personnel landmines. Despite the existence of an array of international legal instruments to protect children in armed conflict, the human rights of children continued to be violated with impunity; there was clearly a need to reverse the trend from blatant disregard to strict observance of those instruments. Her delegation therefore hoped that the strategy proposed by the

Special Representative for an era of application of international law would turn out to be an effective tool, and considered that the signature and ratification of the Optional Protocols would be a step in the right direction. Another step would be to ensure that the perpetrators of those heinous crimes were held accountable through concerted international action. The Gambia therefore supported the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the proposed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

63. Given the role played by vested interests in the perpetuation of conflicts, the Gambia supported the Special Representative's recommendation regarding the need to monitor and control illicit trade in natural resources that fuelled conflicts, especially diamonds (A/55/442, para. 128).

64. There was ample demonstration of interest on the part of the international community regarding the issue of children and armed conflict, judging from the number of conferences held since 1998 and listed in the Special Representative's report, as well as from the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on that issue. That apparent interest, however, must be translated into concrete actions to protect children. For those reasons, the Gambia wished to highlight the importance of conflict prevention and early-warning systems, and the need for specific measures to address the root causes of conflict.

65. **Ms. Rustam** (Indonesia) associated her delegation with the statement given by Malaysia on behalf of the States members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). She said that the progress achieved towards universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the two Optional Protocols were encouraging. Yet much more needed to be done to address the safety, protection and development of children. Indonesia therefore looked forward to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Indonesia was working to finalize its report on national follow-up activities, detailing those areas where progress had been made, such as reduction of infant mortality, and obstacles that remained.

66. For Indonesia, as for many other States, the single biggest threat to the health and welfare of children was poverty. That remained an incomprehensible fact in an age of such great wealth and prosperity; indeed, in many countries poverty was increasing. Commitments were made annually to resolve that situation through such means as official development assistance, debt relief and anti-poverty programmes, but to little avail. Yet, protection of the rights of the child called for a healthy socio-economic environment, financial stability at the national level, sustained economic recovery after financial crises, and international cooperation.

67. Another consequence of pervasive poverty – although poverty did not excuse such practices – was child labour and child prostitution. Indonesia had signed and ratified ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Indonesia had a National Commission on Child Protection to address those issues.

68. Indonesia was deeply concerned over the problem of children in armed conflict. It firmly believed that the rights of children must be a priority in all peacemaking, peace-building and conflict resolution, as well as in plans for demobilization and reintegration. In that regard, it welcomed the outcome of the Winnipeg International Conference on War-Affected Children, and commended the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his efforts to highlight that problem.

69. Indonesia joined in calling for urgent measures to protect children from the effects of landmines and appealed to the international community for technical and financial assistance in mine clearance and rehabilitation of victims. It welcomed the mine-awareness programmes being implemented by United Nations agencies and supported the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. She expressed her delegation's concern about the immediate and long-term effects of sanctions, which should contain measures to ensure that humanitarian supplies reached affected populations, particularly children.

70. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the member countries of the Rio Group.

71. His Government continued to devote much attention to the promotion and protection of the rights

of children. It was seeking to strengthen the mechanisms set up with a view to improving the critical situation of many children and young people because of poverty, the unfavourable economic and social situation, natural disasters such as hurricanes Mitch and Keith, illiteracy, diseases and the existence of juvenile gangs. It had recently announced its national policy in behalf of children and young people and had begun to implement a number of programmes, including a prevention programme entitled "Young country: your future begins today", which was designed to enable young people to participate in public life and to help in integrating them into society. The Office of the Procurator for the Protection of Human Rights was also implementing, with support from UNICEF and from Save the Children, a prevention project entitled "Protection of the basic rights of children and young people", designed to involve children and young people in collective activities at the local and national level by developing their capacities and skills as leaders and organizers.

72. The Salvadorean Government had recently signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and was currently undertaking the necessary domestic formalities with a view to signing the other Optional Protocol in the near future.

73. El Salvador attached great importance to the building of a culture of peace and, in particular, to the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace, which would serve as a frame of reference for the activities to be organized from 2001 in the context of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 53/25. It also attached great importance to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, and hoped that the international community would on that occasion adopt tangible measures to combat the worst manifestations of poverty, which caused serious harm to children.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.